The Bishop of *LINCOLN's*

CHARGE

TO THE

CLERGY

OF THE

Archdeaconries of HUNTINGTON, BUCKS, and BEDFORD,

AT HIS

Triennial Visitation,

BEGUN AT

Huntington, June 6. 1727.

WITH A

LETTER to the CLERGY of the Archdeaconries of LEICESTER, LINCOLN, and STOW.

N. G. LONDON,

Printed for JOHN WYAT, at the *Rose* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard. MDCCXXVII.

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MY BRETHREN,

COME, now, a ſecond Time to viſit you, and behold with Joy your Order and Stedfaſtneſs, conformable I truſt, in ſome Degree, to the Advices and Directions given, at my firſt Appearance amongſt you.

I then ſet out, as near as I could, a compleat Syſtem of the Rules which were and are to govern us in the ſeveral Parts of our Miniſtry, and in our Intercourſes with each other.

And as the End of Viſiting will ever be the ſame, and the Condition of Things and Perſons to be viſited very near the ſame; ſo the Advices and Directions to be given on theſe Occaſions, ſhould, generally, and for the main Lines, be much the ſame: and will be ſo, when they are drawn, as they ſhould be, not from private Schemes, but from the Canons of Scripture, and the Wiſdom of Legiſlatures.

The Rules propounded at my first Visitation being of this kind, *i. e.* founded on Scripture, and the Establishments of our Legislature, I can do nothing better at this or at any following Visitation which God shall permit me to make, than to keep to the Path, the beaten Path, in which I set out, and build on the Foundation already laid; adding only, *pro hic & nunc*, what shall be needful, not to form a new Church, but to strengthen and adorn the old one.

It is the main End, and may justly be allowed to be the first and principal Business at every Diocesan Synod, to imprint on the Minds of the Clergy, in their respective Degrees, the Weight and Dignity of the Office whereunto they are severally called.

An Office of greatest Weight and Importance it must surely be, which Christ himself thought fit to institute for carrying on the Work which he himself had undertaken, the Work of Man's Salvation. And very awful must be the Charge hereby derived on every one engaged in this Ministry, so to take heed unto himself, and to his Doctrine, that none of those committed to his Conduct may, through any Fault of his, fall short of the Happiness provided for 'em.

An honourable Office too it is, as it admits us to be Fellow-workers with Christ, and advances us thereby to a nearer Relation, to a closer Union and Communion with him. But this reminds us at the same time, that the Honour of this Office is annex'd to the Work and Labour of it: So that how justly soever every one that labours in the Word and Doctrine is entitled to that double Honour, [In due Estimation surpassing the most pompous glittering

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Honours which the World can beſtow] he who neglects his Work, or deſerts his Truſt, doth, by that Act, give up all Pretence to this Honour——and inſtead of the Eſteem due to his Rank and Station, can expect nothing but the Reproach and Contempt which is on every Hand liberally beſtow'd on the idle and unprofitable Servant.

This points out the only Way to that Eſteem which is the Reward and Honour of the Paſtoral Office; plainly ſhewing, that this Eſteem is not to be commanded by a haughty Look, or a high Stomach, by hanging out the Enſigns of Superiority, and challenging, on all Occaſions, Homage and Incenſe from the reſt of the World; but, by a modeſt, retired, contemplative Life; by weaning the Heart from the World, and the Things of the World; and by turning the Thoughts to this one Thing, the Buſineſs of the Paſtoral Function, and drawing all the Cares and Studies this Way. A Clergy thus ſecreted from the Buſineſs and Diverſions of the Age, to a cloſe and conſtant waiting on their Miniſtries in the Houſe and Service of God, will, by all that are about them, be conſider'd as his Servants, and eſteemed very highly for their Work-ſake.

A Coincidence of evil Accidents, may, in ſome Circumſtances, for ſome time, intercept the faithful Paſtor's juſt Eſteem. Wicked Arts may miſconſtrue, may miſrepreſent him, may procure him Returns of Evil for Good, and Hatred for his Love. But unfeigned Piety, and undeſigning Probity, ſhining forth from the Obſcurities of a retired, ſtudious, paſtoral Life, diſengaged from the World, and devoted entirely to God, and the Increaſe of Religion, muſt at length diſperſe the Miſts, all the Prejudices and Prepoſſeſſions, that Atheiſm or Ambition can bring together, to cloud the ſpiritual Man, and his ſpi-

ritual Life, and commend them to every Man's Conſcience in the Sight of God.

For this is the Will of God——That by keeping at diſtance from the Corruptions of the World, and yet enduring, as Chriſt alſo endured, the Contradiction of Sinners, we ſhould, by patient Continuance in well-doing, put to Silence the Ignorance of fooliſh Men.

And the Wiſdom of our Fathers is not in any part of their Conduct more worthy of Acceptation, than in the Method they took for maintaining the Dignity of the Clergy; which was not by any Arcana's for compaſſing Wealth or Power, for coming at the Cabinets or Coffers of Princes, for wheedling or enſlaving, for over-reaching or over-ruling other Orders of Men; but by obliging the Clerical Orders to mind their own Buſineſs, to reſide upon and attend to their own Cures, and ſo be kept from ſubjecting themſelves to all the Reproach and Obloquy to which a Clergyman, under a ſecular Life, and a promiſcuous Converſation, unavoidably lies expos'd.

This conſtant Reſidence and cloſe Waiting, thus ſtrongly inſiſted on, was not for Form ſake only, or for Shew; but for neceſſary Buſineſs; for earning honeſtly the Livelihood of the Goſpel, for doing the Work of the Miniſtry, not ſlothfully or deceitfully, but as Workmen that need not be aſhamed.

I ſhall not, now, enter into a detail of the miniſterial Functions, or repeat again,——What long training and continued Care is requiſite for the Attainment of an acceptable Manner of reading the Morning and Evening Services; what Labour and Study neceſſary to prepare a Man for conſtant, ſound, and uſeful Preaching; what Patience and

and Abstraction from all other Cares is generally necessary to a decent waiting for contingent Calls to the occasional Offices of the Church——

But there is one Point which I must not altogether pass over, and this is, the Parish-Minister's chief Concern in the Government of his Parish, especially with respect to the Manners of the People, and the constant good Maintenance of the Church and the Poor.

This is a Part without which the other Parts of his Office will rarely have any good effect—— That, without which, his People will have but little Order among themselves, and very little Esteem or Regard for him.

His legal Style of Rector supposes this Authority vested in him, or his Substitute. His immemorial and undisputed Presidence in and over all Church-Meetings, confirm this Authority. And the Obligation which all Church-Wardens are under, by the 43d of *Eliz.* to meet once a Month, at least, in their Parish-Church, on some *Sunday* after Evening Service, gives him an Opportunity of exercising this Authority.

And would the prudent Parish-Minister in every Place insist on having these Monthly Meetings duly kept up; would he always be at the Head of these Meetings, and keep the chief Direction of the Business there transacted, in his Hands; would he improve those Opportunities for consulting with his Churchwardens about the spiritual State of his Parish, and engage them to join with him for the Encouragement of Religion and Vertue, as by all proper Methods, so especially by that which God himself hath approved, and enjoined as the best and fittest for keeping up a Sense of Religion in the World, I mean a strict

and ſolemn Obſervation of the Lord's Day; would he proceed, with their Help, to enquire after and note all open Offences againſt the Rules of Piety and good Manners; would he *provide* to have the Offenders firſt privately and tenderly admoniſhed of their Faults, and then, if need be, more ſharply rebuked and authoritatively required to amend their Miſdoings: And, laſt of all, when nothing leſs will do, to have them ſolemnly brought before the Ordinary, as publick and incorrigible Offenders to receive the publick Diſcipline of the Church; This would undoubtedly make a great Alteration for the better in all Places. This is certainly the legal, and ſeemingly the readieſt Way for compaſſing that general Reformation which all good Men deſire and pray for, and likewiſe for recovering to the Clergy that Authority and Influence which hath gradually decreas'd under the Diſuſe of this Part of their Paſtoral Government, in moſt Places.

And for theſe two Reaſons, for the Re-eſtabliſhment of the Paſtoral Authority, and for Bettering the State of Religion by the help of it, I do earneſtly recommend the Trial of this Legal Method of Reformation; and, as far as by Law I may, do enjoin the holding theſe Pariſh Meetings, or Veſtries on *Sundays*, after Evening Service, once at leaſt in every Month, throughout this Dioceſe.

After our firſt Thoughts about the Government of our ſelves, and thoſe committed to our Care, our next Concern ſhould be about that which is next in Importance, about the Deſignation of thoſe that are to ſucceed us, about the Choice of Deacons and Subordinate Curates, to fill That Nurſery for all Degrees of the Clergy, That Nurſery wiſely training up for the Supply of our Mortality, and for Advancements in their due Time, to the higher Miniſtries in the Church.

This Nurſery, as Tranſplantations are made from it, is to be fill'd up by you. Into this, indeed, it is my Office to admit; but it is your *Privilege* to recommend; and ſuch only as are recommended by you, can be admitted by me. So that if Perſons unfit, or unworthy, have Admittance, the Blame muſt, in great Meaſure, if not altogether, lie on that College, or that Vicinage, who join'd in certifying, or in Recommending them as worthy, who were, indeed, unworthy of Admittance.

Upon this State, which is certainly the true State of the Caſe, you will ſee how neceſſary it is, that you ſhould always examine the Grounds on which you found your Recommendations, and be firſt aſſured that the Perſons, to whom you give them, have a Competency of Learning, and, what is ſtill of more Moment, a Competency of Age, Experience, and Diſcretion for the Government of themſelves and a Pariſh too.

None ſhould be thought worthy of your Recommendations, but ſuch as do previouſly give you juſt Aſſurance, that they have been, for ſome Time paſt, diſpoſing and preparing themſelves for the Miniſtry; that, to ſome Skill in the learned Languages, and Technical Sciences, they have added the Knowledge of the Scriptures, have read them over once at leaſt ſince the one and twentieth Year of their Age, and do fully purpoſe to make them their conſtant Study——; That they have alſo read carefully the Rubrics, Canons, and Articles of our Church, with the help of ſome good Notes, and gone through ſome one approved Body of Divinity, ſuch as *Hammond*'s Practical Catechiſm, or *Grotius* on the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion.

This is but a ſhort Courſe of Learning, yet it is a Courſe that few young Students enter upon, before they have finiſh'd other Studies; and ſo it is no wonder if *very* few compleat this ſhort Courſe, before they have compleated the Three and Twentieth Year of their Age: Fewer ſtill there be, that before this Age attain to that Experience and Diſcretion, which are ſufficient to carry 'em through the Difficulties of their Office, and preſerve them from thoſe Snares that will be laid in their Way, by the wicked and inſidious Part of Mankind.

This then, in the preſent State of Things, ſhould be your general Rule, That when young Students have paſſed their Three and Twentieth Year, and have given Specimens of their Diſcretion, and of their Turn and Application to ſacred Learning; then, and not till then, ſhould they be judged fit and worthy to be by you commended to the Miniſtry.

The Canon of 1603, which regulates this Matter, may receive a Conſtruction which will juſtify you, in recommending Candidates for Deacons Orders, before their Three and twentieth Year be compleated. And I who am to act as Judge in the Caſe, cannot well reject a Man ſo ſent, ſome Months ſhort of that Age, for that Deficiency only: But you are under no neceſſity to put this Difficulty on me, or ſlip in at this Gap, raw and unexperienced Men upon the Church. The Honour of your Order, and the preſent State of Things diſſuade and withhold you from it.

Having done your Part towards providing a Stock of fit and able Men to ſucceed us, you will think your ſelves obliged

obliged to give your Help alſo towards ſecuring a competent Maintenance for 'em; at leaſt to take heed, that the Maintenance provided by the Piety of Fore-fathers, ſuffers no Diminution by any Act or Omiſſion of yours.

The Time will not allow me to enter far into this Matter;

I can only ſuggeſt in Generals, —— That you take ſpecial Care how you come into your Livings. For thoſe that come not well *in*, ſeldom have it in their Power to leave 'em *well* when they go out.

That you ſhould be early in your Enquiries after the Poſſeſſions and Revenues of your Churches.

That you ſhould carefully tranſmit wiſe and faithful Accounts of your Poſſeſſions and Revenues to the Biſhop's Regiſtry, as oft as your Terrars are called for.

That for the Information of Succeſſors, you ſhould enter in your Pariſh-Regiſters, Memorials of all remarkable Incidents affecting the *Claims* of your Church.

That your private Leger, or Book of yearly Accounts with your Pariſhioners, be kept with great Exactneſs, and tranſmitted with juſt Care to him that comes after.

That, through your whole Time, your Church Manſes and Fabrics be not only kept up, but improved in ſome decent Proportion to the Advance and Improvement in other Buildings; and your Pariſhioners have always before their Eyes the good State of your Chancels, to raiſe their Devotion towards their Churches; and to impreſs on their Minds what you have always imprinted on yours,

—viz. That the Houſe of God has a juſt Claim to be the beſt Houſe in the Pariſh: As we ſee it conſidered in the Appointments for the Churches now building in the Royal City, under the auſpicious Influence of our gracious King, whoſe tranſcendent Beauty and Magnificence are, in all parts, ſuch as may denote the Greatneſs of the Majeſty to whoſe Honour they are and were erected.

This Mention of our great, and wiſe, and gracious KING, with this one amongſt the many Inſtances of his Grace and Goodneſs, cannot but put us in mind of one Duty more, at all times proper, more eſpecially on all Occaſions of ſolemn Aſſembly, the Duty of expreſſing our Thankfulneſs to Almighty God, as for all his Mercies abounding to us, beyond the Meaſures vouchſafed to other Nations, ſo more eſpecially for making this wiſe and glorious Prince the happy Inſtrument of ſo many worthy Deeds as have, under his Government, been done to our Church and Nation, and of that Glory and Honour which his Providence hath procured for us, in the Sight of the Nations round about.

Let us never ceaſe to pray to God to continue to his Choſen Servant his wonted Favour and Protection, ſo as *ſtill* to make all Oppoſition fall before him: To give him for our Good, as well as for a Reward of his own Goodneſs, Length of Days in one Hand, as well as Riches and Honours in the other; Length of Days, with great Proſperity, to behold the happy Fruits of that happy Wiſdom with which the Fountain of all Wiſdom hath enrich'd him; by which the great Governor of the World hath enabled him to govern this Nation in great Tranquility; enabled him to defend our Faith, and protect our Poſſeſſions, without much Interruption of our Peace from the

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open Invaders of the one, or the more insidious Assailants of the other.

And as a further Proof of our Sincerity herein, let us to our Prayers join our hearty Endeavours to engage each other, and all that are committed to our Care, diligently to do the Duties of our Stations with all chearful Obedience; to manifest hereby to all the World, that when we pray for the Life of our King, and the Life of his Son, and praise Almighty God for the Blessings we hold or hope for from Them and their Providence—we do this not of Form or of Custom only, but of true Love to them, our selves, and our Country, and for that which is the true and great End of all Intercession for all good Governors, *viz.* That by God's Blessing, we, under them, may lead Quiet and Peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty.

To the Reverend the Clergy of the Archdeaconries of Leicester, Lincoln, and Stow.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

MY first Thoughts, upon this Visitation, were for leaving the Article of the Charge from the Chair, upon the Foot on which I had put it at my Primary Visitation, that by shortning the Process, in this Part, I might have more time for the Enquiry, and for Confirmation, which I proposed to minister in the Course of my Visitations, according to the Canons and Custom of the Church.

But on further Consideration of the ordinary Practice, and general Expectation of having something of this kind, on these solemn Assemblies, I determin'd, before I set out, to put together my Thoughts upon the Occasion. And this I did in such manner, that those who heard what was thus put together, would easily perceive the Disposition to have been, in some sort *extempore*, not at all fitted to come to you by the way in which you now receive it.

I personally visited the Southern Archdeaconries, and was preparing in like manner to visit the Northern: But the Death of the late KING, of ever-glorious Memory, and the Accession of our present Most Gracious Sovereign to the Throne of these Kingdoms, with my Call to Parliament hereupon, making it necessary for me to finish my Visitation by my Chancellor; the best that I can do, in these Circumstances, is, to transmit to you, as I do herewith, an exact Account of what I propounded to our Brethren

thren in the Southern Archdeaconries, that the Progreſs and Effect of the Viſitation may be, in all Parts of the Dioceſe, as uniform as the preſent State of Things will admit.

To the Arguments which you will find I had uſed for exciting due Thankfulneſs to God for the Bleſſings enjoy'd under the happy Government of the deceaſed King, you will *now* think it an Addition, that the Reparation of the great Loſs, which was to be ſadly felt whenever God ſhould take to himſelf this glorious KING, had been, by the Divine Goodneſs, moſt kindly provided for, in the Inſtitution of the moſt Illuſtrious PRINCE who was to ſucceed, exerciſed in all the good Arts of Empire, confirm'd in the Wiſdom of governing according to Law, and forward, as is ſeen with univerſal Joy, to give the earlieſt Aſſurances, " That the Preſervation of the Conſtitution in " Church and State ſhall be his firſt, and always his chief " Care. "

This will engage us all, with one Heart, to pray to God for his Majeſty's Health and Proſperity; to expreſs, on all proper Occaſions, our ſincere Affection for his Perſon and Family; and to endeavour, as much as in us lies, in our Places and Callings, to render his Government eaſy to himſelf, and happy to his People.

I pray God to have you in his good keeping, and with all true Kindneſs and Eſteem, remain,

Park-Street, June 24. 1727.

Your very Loving Friend,

and Brother,

R. Lincoln.